

GROWTH OF GERMAN INFLUENCE

cally and politically. She supported the Iranian Democratic party, which was composed of liberal intelligentsia and merchant classes. This party grew steadily more and more pro-German and at the same time gained ascendancy in the Majlis. Moreover, the traditional British influence exercised on Iranian constitutionalists waned as a result of the 1907 agreement. This feeling of disappointment and resentment against British and Russian imperialism was exploited by German diplomacy. Consequently, a large part of the Majlis, including its President, became pro-German. The same was true of a number of important ministers in the cabinets that preceded the first World War. A German school was founded in Teheran, offering excellent education to the sons of the most prominent Iranian families, who not infrequently continued their higher studies at German universities.

Prewar attempts at appeasement, due to the tense international atmosphere, resulted only in giving Germany a better opportunity to pursue her aims. Thus, as a result of the Potsdam conference between Wilhelm II and Nicolas II, an agreement was signed in 1911 in St. Petersburg that opened new vistas for the success of the Berlin-Bagdad railway. According to the agreement Russia was to ask Iran for the railway concession from Teheran to Khanaqin. Upon completion, this line was to be linked with the Berlin-Bagdad railway. The Russian government undertook to consider the wishes of Germany regarding the exact tracing of the new line. It promised, moreover, that if the concession were left unexploited by Russia for four years, the latter would cede it to Germany. In this way Iran became an

integral part of the master plan of the Berlin-Bagdad railway and became subject to all its political implications. However, the outbreak of the first World War put an end to these schemes. But by that time Germany had managed to secure an important influence in Iran.

When the war broke out, German's preparatory activities in the Middle East were crowned with a large measure of success, for the Ottoman Empire followed the lead of Berlin and Vienna. If Iran were won to the same cause, German strategic triumph would have been complete. Hence, after the beginning of the war, feverish efforts were made to induce Iran to side with the central powers. German